

LX.

# MEMMOIRS

OF

## LITERATURE.

MONDAY, April 30. 1711.

I.

ESSAIS de THEODICEE,  
sur la Bonté de Dieu, la Liberté de l'  
Homme, & l'Origine du Mal. A Am-  
sterdam, chez Isaac Troyel Libraire.  
1710.

That is, *An Essay upon the Goodness of  
God, the Free-Will of Man, and the Ori-  
gin of Evil.* By THEODICÆUS.  
Amsterdam, 1710. in 8vo. pagg. 666.  
46. 99. besides the Preface.

THE Matters treated of in this Book, are some  
of the most important in Philosophy and Di-  
vinity, and such as have exercised Thinking  
Men in all Ages. Besides, the Author, who has un-  
dertaken to write upon those Subjects, is eminently  
qualified for such a Performance. Those Two Consi-  
derations render this Work extremely valuable. There  
has been a Time when a Book of this Nature would  
have been Translated into English: Good and Useful  
Books were then more generally read than they are  
now.

Before I proceed to give an Account of this Work,  
it will not be improper to take notice of the Chara-  
cter of the Author. *Theodicæus*, tho' a Lay-man, is  
well skill'd in Divinity. He is an Excellent Philoso-  
pher, a Mathematician of the first Rank, a good Philo-  
loger, well vers'd in History and the Learned Languages;  
in a word, there is hardly any Man of a more  
Solid and Universal Learning. He is no less admira-  
ble for his Polite Way of Writing: He confutes those  
that differ from him, with great Modesty: He does  
Justice to every body, and discovers a wonderful Hu-  
manity. I must add, that tho' the French Language be  
not his Mother-Tongue, he writes it with great Po-  
liteness and Elegance. If I bestow this Just Encomi-  
um upon that illustrious Author, 'tis in order to shew  
that Religion cannot be defended by a more able Pen.  
*Theodicæus* undertakes to vindicate even the most My-  
sterious Doctrines, and to shew that the greatest Ob-  
jections that can be raised against them, are far from  
being Demonstrative Arguments.

This Work contains, 1. A Long Preface. 2. A Pre-  
liminary Discourse concerning the Agreement of Faith

with Reason. 3. An Essay upon the Goodness of God,  
the Free-Will of Man, and the Origin of Evil, divided  
into Three Parts. 4. A Latin Piece entitled, *Causa De-  
i asserta per Justitiam ejus, cum ceteris ejus Perfectionibus  
cunctisque Actionibus conciliatam.* 5. Some Reflexions up-  
on a Book of Mr. *Hobbes*, concerning Free-Will, Necessi-  
ty and Chance. 6. Some Remarks upon a late Book  
of His Grace the Lord Archbishop of *Dublin*, concern-  
ing the Origin of Evil. I shall give an Account o  
those Pieces at several times; and because I should be  
too prolix, if I should follow the whole Thread of the  
Author's Reasonings, I think it will be sufficient to take  
notice of the most Remarkable Things contain'd in his  
Book. I know that Variety is both agreeable and useful;  
and therefore I shall take care not to publish my Extracts  
one after another.

*I. Theodicæus* begins his Preface with this Observation,  
That the Generality of Mankind have at all times placed  
Religion in Formalities. A Solid Piety, that is, a true  
Virtue attended with Knowledge, never appear'd among  
the Multitude. Most Men are only affected with outward  
Things: There are but few capable of any Discussion.  
Hence it is that Ceremonies and Articles of Faith are so  
much in Vogue. Religious Ceremonies, says the Author,  
would be very laudable, if those who invented them had  
taken care to make them subservient to true Piety and  
Religion. "It was the Design of *Moses*, and other good  
Legislators, of the wise Founders of Religious Orders,  
"especially of *Jesus Christ*, the Divine Founder of the  
"Purest and Best Religion". The same may be said of  
Articles of Faith; They would be commendable, if they  
contain'd nothing but what is true. But it falls out too  
frequently, that Devotion is stifled by Religious Forma-  
lities, and Truth confounded with the Opinions of  
Men.

The Heathens had but one Sort of Formalities: They  
had many Ceremonies, but no Articles of Faith. Their  
Priests made it their Business to work upon their Minds  
by the Hope or Fear of Temporal Events; but they took  
little Care to make them sensible of another Life, and to  
give them a Right Notion of God and the Immortality  
of their Souls.

Among all the Ancient Nations, none but the *Hebrews*  
had a Publick System of Religion. *Abraham* and  
*Moses* established the Belief of One only God, Author of  
all Things. "The *Hebrews* speak of him in a manner  
"worthy of the Supreme Being; and 'tis a surprizing  
"thing to see the Inhabitants of a small Part of the  
"Earth more enlighten'd than the rest of Mankind.  
"Perhaps the Wise Men of other Nations entertain'd  
"the



"the same Thoughts; but they were not so happy as to get many Followers, and to have their Doctrine made a Law. It does not appear that the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul made Part of the *Mosaic* Laws: *Moses* believed it, and it was handed down among the *Jews*; but it was not authorized in a popular manner, till *Jesus Christ* removed the Veil, and plainly taught that Human Souls receive in another Life the Recompence of their Actions. *Moses* gave a Noble Idea of the Power and Goodness of God, which many Civilized Nations acknowledge to this Day; but *Jesus Christ* laid down all the Consequences arising from that Notion, and made it appear that the Goodness and Justice of God are plainly manifested by the Happiness he designs to bestow upon Men in another World". *Theodiceus* says, he does not mention the other Articles of the Christian Doctrine, being contented to shew how *Jesus Christ* brought Natural Religion into a Law. "He did what so many Philosophers had vainly endeavour'd to do: And Christianity having prevailed at last in the *Roman Empire*, the Religion of Wise Men became the Religion of the World. *Mahomet* did not depart from those Fundamental Doctrines of Natural Religion: His Followers introduced them among the remotest Nations of *Asia* and *Africa*, and abolish'd in many Countries the *Pagan* Superstitions, contrary to the Unity of God, and the Immortality of the Soul.

After these Observations, the Author shews that true Piety, and even true Happiness, consists in the Love of God; but that Love ought to be attended with Knowledge. Our good Actions proceeding from that Principle afford us a Pleasure, which very much heightens our Virtue. When we obey Reason, we fulfil the Orders of the Supreme Reason, and direct all our Intentions to the Common Good, which is not different from the Glory of God. Whether we succeed or not, we are contented with what happens, submitting to the Will of God, and knowing that what he wills is best for us. When we are thus disposed, we are not discouraged by any ill Success; we grieve only for our Faults; and notwithstanding the Ungratefulness of Men, we continue to do all the Good we are capable of. Our Charity is attended with Humility and Moderation, and does not affect to rule over others. Being sensible of our Imperfections, and observing many good Qualities in other Men, we are inclined to censure our Actions, and to excuse their Faults. There can be no Piety without Charity; and whoever is not officious and bountiful, will never have a sincere Devotion.

Nature, a good Education, and the Conversation of pious and virtuous Persons may very much contribute to give such a Frame of Mind; but good Principles will more effectually do it. 'Tis impossible to love God without knowing his Perfections; and that Knowledge contains the Principles of a true Piety. The imprinting of those Principles in Men's Minds ought to be the Design of true Religion: "But it frequently falls out that the Teachers of Religion take a very different Method. Devotion is placed in the Practice of Ceremonies, and the Christian Doctrines have been loaded with Formularies. Those Ceremonies are not always very proper to keep up a Sense of Virtue; and the Formularies are not such as may enlighten the Mind. Who would believe it? The Christians fancied they could be devout without loving their Neighbours, and Pious without loving God: Or they believed they could love their Neighbours without serving them, and love God without knowing him. The Publick was not sensible of this Disorder for several Ages, and there are still great Remains of the Kingdom of Darkness. Some Men, who frequently discourse of Religion, Piety, and Devotion, and whose Profession it is to teach them, have not always a right Notion of the Divine Perfections. Their Ideas of the Goodness and Justice of the Supreme Being are false: They represent God as a Being, that does not deserve our Love and Imitation.

*Theodiceus* looks upon it as a thing of a very dangerous Consequence. He observes that the Ancient Errors of those, who accused the Deity, or represented God as an ill Principle, have been revived in our Days. Some Men

have insisted upon the irresistible Power of God, instead of displaying his infinite Goodness: They have alledged a despotick Authority, instead of conceiving a Power regulated by the greatest Wisdom. Our Author having observed that those wrong Opinions were chiefly grounded upon some confused Notions of Liberty, Necessity, and Destiny, has thought fit to impart to the Publick his Reflexions on those important Matters, in an *Essay upon the Goodness of God, the Free-Will of Man, and the Origin of Evil*.

*Theodiceus* proceeds to make some Reflexions upon the great Question concerning Liberty and Necessity. Men have been at all times puzzled with a Sophism, call'd by the Ancients the *idle Reason*, because it tended to make Men Idle, or Careless, and to mind nothing but their Inclination to a voluptuous Life. For, said they, if things to come are necessary, what is to happen, will infallibly happen, whatever we may do. But (said they) Things to come are necessary, either because God foresees, and even pre-establishes them; or because every thing does necessarily happen by a Concatenation of Causes; or by the very Nature of Truth, which is determined in the Enunciations relating to future Events, as it is in all other Enunciations; for an Enunciation must always be true or false in it self, though we are not always sensible of it.

A wrong Notion of Necessity, being thus introduced among Men, has occasion'd a kind of *Fatum Mahumetanum*, *Turkish Fate*. The Author calls it so, because 'tis commonly said, that the *Turks* will not avoid the greatest Dangers, for some Reasons like those that have been just now mention'd. The *Fatum Stoicum* was not so bad as 'tis generally believed: It did not hinder Men from minding their private Concerns, but made them easy under all Circumstances, considering that Necessity renders all our Cares and Sorrows useless.

The Practice of most Men, and even of most Christians, is attended with a mixture of *Turkish Fate*, though they are not sensible of it. 'Tis true, they are not Idle and Careless upon an imminent Danger, or when they have a Prospect of some great Advantage: But when the Good or Evil is doubtful and at a distance, or when the Remedy appears disagreeable, they are well pleas'd with the *idle Reason*. For Instance, when the Question is to preserve their Health, and even their Lives by a good Regimen, they frequently answer, that our Days are told, and that 'tis in vain to strive against one's Destiny. But those very Men use even the most absurd Remedies to cure a Distemper, which they had neglected.

Men are particularly apt to alledge a pretended Necessity in order to excuse their Vices. "I have frequently heard young Men say, that 'tis in vain to preach up Virtue and to blame Vice, and to talk of Rewards and Punishments, since it may be said of the Book of Fate, 'What is written, is written, and we can make no Alteration in it; and that therefore the best way is to indulge one's Inclinations, and to satisfy the present Desires. Those young Men, who set up for Free-Thinkers, did not consider the strange Consequences of that Argument, which proves too much, since it proves, (for instance,) that one ought to drink a pleasant Liquor, though it were poison'd. For by the same Reason, I might say, if it be written in the Archives of Destiny, that a Poison will kill me now, it will certainly kill me, though I should not drink that Liquor; and if such a thing be not written, that poison'd Liquor will not be the occasion of my Death, though I should drink it; and consequently I may boldly take any thing that I like, though never so pernicious: Which implies a manifest Absurdity. They were a little puzzled with this Objection; but they urg'd again the same Argument turn'd several ways, till I shew'd them wherein the Fault of that Sophism consists. 'Tis not true, that a thing will happen, whatever one may do: It happens because Men do what leads to it: And if the Event is written, the Cause that will produce it is also written. And therefore the Connexion between Effects and their Causes, far from proving a Necessity prejudicial to Practice, plainly proves the contrary.

A fatal Necessity, continues the Author, would be wholly inconsistent with Free-Will; and therefore no Action



Action could be just or unjust, praise-worthy or blameable, and deserve a Reward or Punishment. The Consequences arising from the Doctrine of an irresistible Necessity are so pernicious, that it concerns every Body to know the different Degrees of it; and that some cannot be prejudicial, whilst others are liable to dreadful Consequences.

Some Men not contented to affirm that Virtue and Vice are indifferent Things, carry their Boldness so far as to make God an Accomplice of their Crimes; wherein they imitate the Heathens, who ascribed their wicked Actions to their Gods, as if a Deity moved them to do Evil. The Christian Philosophy, which teaches us the Dependence of all Things from the first Author, and his Concourse with all Human Actions, seems to increase the Difficulty. But supposing that God does not concur with the Sins of Men, his foreseeing and permitting those Sins, which he might have prevented, appear inconsistent with his Holiness. And therefore some Philosophers, and even some Divines, rather chose to deny God's Prescience of Future Events, than to acknowledge it to the Prejudice of his Goodness. The Socinians and Conrad Vorstius are inclined that way. Thomas Bonartes, a Pseudonymous English Jesuit, and a very Learned Man, seems to be of that Opinion in his Book, *De concordia Scientia cum Fide*.

They are doubtless in the wrong; but others are not less to blame, who being persuaded that nothing happens without the Will of God, ascribe to him so many things unworthy of the wisest and best of Beings, that one would think they have no Notion of his Goodness. They believe that God being the Supreme Master of the World, might without any Prejudice to his Holiness induce Men to sin, only because he will have it so, or to have the Pleasure of punishing them. Nay, they affirm that he might take Delight in inflicting eternal Punishments upon Innocent Persons, without any Injustice, because no body has a Right to find fault with what he does. Some are gone so far as to say, that God does actually use his Creatures in such a manner; and because we are extremely inconsiderable with Respect to God, they compare us with Worms, which Men do not scruple to tread upon, or in general with those Animals of a different Kind from ours, for which we have little Regard. Those Extravagant Opinions are now entertain'd by very few Divines; and it must be confess'd that they are altogether inconsistent with the Justice and Holiness of God.

Our Author takes notice, in the next Place, of the Doctrines of Original Sin, Grace, and Predestination, and observes that they are liable to great Difficulties. He undertakes to answer all those Difficulties, and particularly those that concern the Origin of Evil. He gives us the Plan of his Work, which will sufficiently appear by the following Extracts. He bestows a great Encomium upon the late M. Bayle, though he confutes him; and calls his Dictionary a *Wonderful Work*. He says the Eloquence of that Author was as great as his Penetration, and that he has given great Proofs of a vast Erudition.

The next Piece, contain'd in this Volume, is too long to insert here an Extract of it. I hope an Account of this excellent Book will be the more acceptable to the Readers, because it does not appear that it is to be translated into English.

II.

A SEVENTH Extract of the National Synods of the Reformed Churches of France. (The Sixth Extract may be seen in the foregoing Sheet.)

XXIId. National Synod held at Vitre in the Year 1617.

THIS Assembly ordered, that the Deputies of the several Provinces should for the time to come make the following Protestation.

"We promise before God to submit to whatever shall be concluded and resolved in our Holy Assembly, and to obey and execute it with all our Power; being persuaded that God will preside in it, and lead us by his Spirit into all Truth and Equity, by the Rule of his Word, for the Good and Edification of his Church, and for his great Glory. This we beg of him by our Prayers, &c. Pag. 81, 82.

2. "All the Churches are desired to be very cautious in admitting the *Moors* expell'd from Spain, and rambling from one Church to another; and not to give them any Attestation, before a due Examination of their Life and Belief. Those, who have already been admitted, and belong to some Churches, shall be also carefully examin'd in what concerns their Instruction and Conduct: And when any Testimonial shall be deliver'd to them, their Baptism and the Number of their Children shall be mention'd in it; as also whether their Children have been baptized, and at what Age, and by what Signs one may know that they are the same Persons mention'd in the said Certificates. pag. 96, 97.

3. The Deputies of this Synod made a Speech to Lewis XIII. Here follow some Passages out of it.

S I R,

"WE are prostrated at Your Majesty's Feet, with all his Faithful Subjects who profess the Reformed Religion, represented by the National Synod, held at Vitre by your Permission and Royal Authority. We have been deputed by that Assembly, to congratulate your Majesty about the Peace your Kingdom enjoys, and to express our Satisfaction to see your Authority well establish'd, and your Sacred Person at full Liberty. Next to God we ascribe this Happiness to the Resolution your Majesty took, and so generously executed, by punishing that great Disturber of your Kingdom, who design'd to overthrow your Authority, and (which is worse) exposed your Sacred Person to imminent Dangers.

"Your Majesty has acted in a very extraordinary manner; and it was a Divine and Miraculous Attempt, since the Storm was immediately attended with a Calm, and the War with Peace, and our Fears and Dangers were changed into Assurance and Safety: Our Government, which was tyrannical, became mild and equitable; and therefore we see now, as if your Majesty had but lately ascended the Throne, that we have a King indeed, and all the World acknowledges that the King of France deserves to Reign.

"But there are other Reasons, whereby we are strictly bound to it, (to pay a due Obedience to the King,) viz. our Consciences and our Religion, which teach us to obey the Supreme Powers, and that whoever resists them, opposes the Ordinance of God, who raised your Majesty to the Throne, set the Crown on your Head, put the Scepter into your Hands, and all Sorts of Heroical Virtues into your Royal Heart. Wherefore, S I R, next to God we acknowledge that your Majesty is our only Sovereign; and it is an Article of our Belief, that there is no intermediate Power between God and Kings. It is a Damnable Heresy among us to doubt of it, and a Capital Crime to dispute about it. S I R, We have learn'd this of our Predecessors: We are persuaded of it, and proclaim it every where. We preach that Doctrine in the Pulpit: We desire to live and dye in those Sentiments, that our Posterity may learn to do the same in our Imitation. Pag. 105, 106.

SOISSONS.



## SOISSONS.

There are in *Our Lady's Abby* in this City Two Ancient Monuments, one of which is ascribed by a popular Tradition to *St. Derosin*, Bishop of *Soissons*; and the other to *St. Voué* Confessor. Father *Spiridion Poupart*, Religious Penitent of the Third Order of *St. Francis*, pretends to prove that it is a false Tradition, and has lately publish'd a Dissertation, in which he says that the Opinion of those who ascribe the First Tomb to *St. Derosin*, is at most problematical, and the Second utterly false. He does not prove his Assertion by any Piece to be found in the Works of Ancient Authors, or by any Inscription, but by an Explication of the Symbols and Ornaments, which appear upon those Monuments. Having laid down, that those Tombs were made under the Reign of *Constantius, Magnentius, or Decentius*, he undertakes to explain the Ornaments that are upon the First; and concludes from his Explication, that this Tomb might have been made for *St. Derosin*, because those Ornaments suit with a Bishop. But he is not fully convinced of it, because those Ornaments may suit with any Christian, whatever Condition he be of.

There are Five Representations upon the Second Monument, says the Author. The first is a Christening; the second, a Woman in the Posture of a Suppliant; the third, a Cross, Two Soldiers, a Crown of Laurel, Three Doves, and a Greek Christ; the fourth, a Man in the Posture of a Suppliant; the fifth, some Persons who quench their Thirst. At the end opposite to the Altar there are a burning Stove, and Two Men who joyn Hands; and at the other end, a naked Man, and a Griffin. I maintain, says the Author, that this Tomb was never made for *St. Voué*. Here follow the best Arguments he alledges for it. 1. A Crown of Laurel among the Ancients was only bestowed upon Military Men, or those who carried a Prize in the Games consecrated to *Apollo*. It cannot be said that this Crown was put here for a Man, who got the Prize at any profane Games, since it appears among Christian Ornaments. And therefore that Monument must have been made for a Military Man, who was a Christian. 2. The Ornaments of a Tomb ought to have some Affinity with the Condition of the Person buried under it: But what Affinity can Two Soldiers and a Crown of Laurel have with such an Anachoret as *St. Voué* was? 3. Father *Poupart* pretends that those Two Soldiers are Legionary Soldiers; from whence he concludes that this Tomb was made for the General of an Army, or an Officer of Distinction.

## PARIS.

Father *Calmet* † has publish'd a Fourth Volume of his Commentary upon the Bible, viz. upon *Joshua*, the *Judges*, and *Ruth*.

*Commentaire littéral sur tous les Livres de l'Ancien & Nouveau Testament. Par le R. P. D. Augustin Calmet, Religieux Benedictin de la Congregation de S. Vanne & de S. Hyulphe. JOSUE, LES JUGES, ET RUTH. Paris. 1711. in 4to.*

The Author has prefixed to the Book of *Joshua*, 1. A Preface. 2. A Chronological Table of the chief Things mention'd in that Book. 3. A Dissertation upon *Joshua's* commanding the Sun and Moon to stand still. 4. Another Dissertation concerning the Stones that fell from Heaven upon the *Canaanites*. 5. A third Dissertation, wherein the Author shews into what Countries the *Canaanites* fled, after they had been expell'd by *Joshua*. 6. Several Remarks upon a new Map of the Land of Promise.

In the first Dissertation, Father *Calmet* maintains that the Sun stood still. *Rabbi Maimonides* does peremptorily

deny it: *Grotius* seems to be of the same Opinion. *Spinoza* says, that *Joshua* and his Army fancied the Sun stood still, because they knew not that the vast Quantity of Hail that was in the Air, might occasion a great Refraction of the Sun's Beams. *La Peyrere* pretends, that the Sun did set as usually; and that being under the Horizon, the *Israelites* believed it was still above it, because they perceived in the Air a Light, that lasted a considerable time. Father *Calmet* confutes those Authors, and finds no Difficulty in the common Opinion. "The Sun and Moon stood still (says he) at the same time, and the whole Machine of the World was at Rest, like all the Parts of a Consort of Musick in a profound Silence."

We read in the Book of *Judges*, Chap. X. v. 11. that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon (the *Canaanites*) unto *Azekah*, and they died, &c. Most Commentators say the Meaning of those Words is, that God sent down a Storm of Hail of an extraordinary Bigness, which falling with great Violence kill'd many *Canaanites*. Father *Calmet* is of another Opinion, and takes the word Stones in a Literal Sense. A Storm of Stones, says he, is neither impossible nor supernatural. There are several Instances of it in the Roman History. On the 7th of November, 1492. (the Author goes on) there fell with a Storm of Hail a large Stone, which I have seen in the Parish-Church of *Ensisheim* in *Alsace*: It looks like a large blackish Flint-Stone, and is said to weigh 300 Pounds. In the Year 1510. there fell in the Fields adjacent to *Abdus* 1200 Stones of an Iron-Colour, extremely hard, and smelling like Brimstone. One of them weigh'd 120 Pounds, and another 60. *Gassendus* says, that on the 29th of November, 1637. about Ten a Clock in the Morning, Two Persons being in the Fields saw above the Mountain of *Varson* a burning Stone in the Air. They heard at first a Noise like that of some Canon-shots; and then there appear'd about the Stone a kind of Circle of several Colours, being about four Foot of Diameter. It went by the Two Men at the distance of a hundred Paces, being raised about thirty Foot above Ground. It fell Three Hundred Paces from the Place where they stood, and made a Hole Three foot deep, where it was found. It was as large as a Calf's Head, and look'd almost like that of a Man. It weigh'd 54 Pounds: One may see it still at *Aix* in *Provence*. When the new Isle of *Santorin* came out of the Sea in 1707. a Noise like that of great Canon-shots was heard for several Days, and many burning Stones flew up into the Air, and fell again into the Sea.

In the Third Dissertation, Father *Calmet* undertakes to prove, that the *Canaanites* retired chiefly into *Africa*, and the Isles of the Mediterranean Sea.

His Remarks upon the Geographical Map of the Land of Promise, are worth Reading. He observes the Mistakes of the Geographers, and particularly those that have been occasion'd by the Relations publish'd ever since the *Crusades*. "When those, says he, who took upon them the Cross for the Holy War, made themselves Masters of *Palestine*, they pretended to find in that Country every thing that was there in the Time of *Joshua* and *Joseph*. Upon a small Resemblance of Names, or Situation, in a word upon the least Conjecture they believed, and made others believe, that such a Place, for instance, was *Bethulia*, another, the Oak of *Mamre*, or *Lor's* Cave, or the Turpentine-tree of *Jacob*, or *Adam's* Sepulchre, or the House of *Cleophas*, or the Juniper-tree of *Elijah*, or the Fountain of *Hagar*, or the *Castellum quod contra vos est*, or a Hundred other Things of the like Nature". The Author represents the Land of Promise much larger than it is commonly thought to be.

There are Two Dissertations prefixed to the Book of *Judges*. The first concerns the Mansions, or Dwelling-Places of the Ancient Hebrews; and the Second, *Jephthah's* Vow.

† See the 164. Page of these Memoirs.